



February 28, 2013

Members of the Senate Committee on Outdoor Recreation and Tourism:

I am writing to communicate our support for **Senate Resolution 20**, a resolution urging Congress to enact legislation to ensure that amounts credited to the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) are used for the purposes the fund is intended; dredging, infrastructure, operation and maintenance of federally-authorized ports, harbors and waterways. For the past decade only about half of the money collected through user fees on cargo vessels has been spent on its intended purpose, all while Great Lakes ports, harbors and waterways are deteriorating and not being maintained appropriately.

Congress established the HMTF in 1986 to recover the operation and maintenance costs, mainly dredging to the authorized depths and widths, of coastal and Great Lakes harbors from maritime shippers. The federal government levies the tax based on cargo value at a rate of 0.125%. Congress appropriates funding for operation and maintenance activities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from the HMTF revenues. Total funding on operations and maintenance has been lower than the amount deposited in the fund for over a decade, leading to a projected accumulation of funds of over \$8 billion by the beginning of FY2014.

The Detroit Regional Chamber's over 20,000 members and affiliates, from sole proprietors to fortune 500 companies, provide jobs to over ¾ million working men and women, making it the largest local chamber in the United States. Our members take great pride in knowing that the Great Lakes serve as a vital conduit, both for domestic industry and international trade. The Detroit Regional Chamber is a key member of the Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition and the coalition ranks the proper use of the HMTF as a key priority. Next week, myself and representatives from several other Great Lakes Metropolitan Chambers of Commerce will be in Washington D.C. to meet with members of Congress and stress the importance that they act and act now to allow Great Lakes ports to be maintained in a way which they are able to be used to their full potential. Efficient ports are a key economic factor in the Great Lakes economy but those ports have to be well-dredged or ships have to be light-loaded. To put this in perspective, one inch of draft in a laker can mean the difference between hundreds of thousands of dollars in cargo.

The Detroit Regional Chamber supports efforts in Washington, through H.R. 335 and S. 218, to maximize the use of our ports, harbors and waterways by maintaining them properly. We ask that you vote **YES** on **Senate Resolution 20** to support the efforts being made in Washington and send the message to Congress this is of high importance to the future of economic development opportunities for Michigan and other Great Lakes states.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradley G. Williams".

Bradley G. Williams
Vice President, Government Relations

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